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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 07//07

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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, July 2

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
July 3, 2007

09:07

Met Defense Minister Kyuma at the Kantei, followed by Health, Labor and Welfare Minister Yanagisawa.

10:35

Met NHK management committee member Shigetaka Komori.

11:01

Attended safety award ceremony. Afterward met Russian Deputy Premier Naryshkin.

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12:13

Met Tokyo air pollution chief plaintiff Junji Nishi.

14:00

Recorded video message for LDP website. Afterward met LDP Secretary General Nakagawa.

15:12

Met Lower House member Yasutoshi Nishimura.

16:09

Met Vice Foreign Minister Yachi at the Kantei.

17:02

Attended LDP executive meeting in the Diet building.

17:23

Returned to the Kantei.

19:12

Returned to his official residence.

4) Poll: 24 % to vote for DPJ, 17 % for LDP; Cabinet support hits lowest 32 %

TOKYO (Page 1) (Full)
July 3, 2007

Kyodo News conducted a telephone-based nationwide public opinion survey on June 30 and July 1 to probe public attitudes toward this month's election for the House of Councillors.

In the survey, respondents were asked which political party or which political party's candidate they would vote for in their proportional representation blocs. In response to this question, 24.5 % picked the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), up 2.4 percentage points from the last survey taken June 23-24. The DPJ topped all other parties. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party was at 17.9 % , down 1.9 points. The margin between the two parties has widened. In electoral districts as well, the DPJ topped all other parties at 22.9 % , up 0.9 points from the last survey. The LDP was at 19.2 % , down 2.2 points.

What lies behind such results is apparently public dissatisfaction with the problem of the government's pension record-keeping flaws. Meanwhile, the LDP and its coalition partner, New Komeito, rammed a number of bills-including those related to a reform of the Social Insurance Agency-through the Diet in the face of opposition from the opposition bench. Furthermore, Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma justified the United States' dropping of A-bombs on Japan, saying it

"couldn't be helped." The survey results this time can be taken as reflecting these factors. This shows that the LDP and the Abe government are under fire from the public.

The biggest focus is whether the ruling coalition can maintain its present majority of the seats in the House of Councillors, including those not up for reelection. Asked about this, a total of 52.4 % answered that they would like the ruling coalition to lose its majority, up 4.1 points. Meanwhile, the proportion of those who would like the LDP-led coalition to maintain its majority was 32.5 % , down 4.0 % .

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The approval rating for the Abe cabinet was 32.0 % , down 1.5 points. The Abe cabinet's support rate renewed its record low since Abe took office in September last year. The disapproval rating also reached 58.1 % , up 0.4 point.

Respondents were also asked what to do if the ruling coalition fails to keep its majority in the House of Councillors. To this question, 38.4 % said the House of Representatives should be dissolved for a general election, up 7.4 points. In the meantime, the proportion of those who insist on replacing the prime minister was only 10.6 % .

In popularity rating for proportional representation, New Komeito stood at 5.7 % , with the Japanese Communist Party at 4.2 % , the Social Democratic Party (Shaminto) at 1.3 % , the People's New Party (Kokumin Shinto) at 0.7 % , and the New Party Nippon (Shinto Nippon) at 0.2 % . "Undecided" accounted for 41.0 % .

In addition, respondents were further asked to pick up to two issues which they think are important. To this question, "pension" was still high with 60.1 % , though the figure was down 3.3 points from the last survey. Among other issues, "education" was at 22.1 % , and "social divide" at 19.8 % .

Those "very interested" and "somewhat interested" in the upcoming election totaled 75.2 % .

5) Poll: DPJ favored by 66 % , LDP at 33 % ; 70 % hope to see change in governing framework

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
July 3, 2007

The Mainichi Shimbun conducted an online public opinion survey on June 29-30 to probe public attitudes toward this month's election for the House of Councillors. "Which do you like better, the Liberal Democratic Party or the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto)?" In response to this question, 66 % picked the DPJ, with 33 % choosing the LDP. "Do you hope to see a change in the governing framework?" To this question, "yes" accounted for 70 % , with "no" at only 29 % .

Among men, 31 % like the LDP better, with 68 % preferring the DPJ. Among women, 35 % favor the LDP while 64 % like the DPJ better. All these figures are severe for the LDP.

In the survey, respondents were also asked whether they would like to see a change in the ruling coalition of the LDP and New Komeito. In response, "yes" and "no" were on a par at 50 % both among LDP supporters and among Komeito supporters. This shows that half the respondents, even among those who support the ruling parties, want to see a change in the LDP-led coalition. Among Abe cabinet supporters as well, opinion was split with "yes" at 51 % and "no" at 48 % .

In addition, respondents were also asked about the government's pension record-keeping flaws. "Do you think the government can check within one year as explained by the government?" To this question, 92 % gave negative answers. Respondents were further asked if they thought the opposition parties have fully played their roles to pursue the government's responsibility to answer public expectations. In response, 82 % answered "no." The survey shows

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that many were turning a severe eye not only to the government and ruling parties but also to the opposition parties.

Meanwhile, various political parties are going to field celebrities in the election. Asked about this, 78 % said it is "questionable," with 22 % seeing "no problem."

6) Kyuma attends USFJ ceremony

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
July 3, 2007

Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma attended a US military ceremony that was held yesterday at the US Air Force's Yokota base in Tokyo to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the headquarters of US Forces Japan. In his speech there, Kyuma pointed to the existence of "many challenges" between Japan and the United States, such as realigning the presence of US forces in Japan and propelling bilateral cooperation on missile defense. In addition, Kyuma suggested the need for the two countries to exchange views closely. "I'd like to endeavor to carry out these challenges in a steady way," he stressed.

7) Prime Minister reprimands Kyuma in bid to promptly quell aftermath of his remark: Negative reaction from LDP members in Upper House, whose seats are up for reelection

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
July 3, 2007

In connection with the issue of Defense Minister Kyuma remarking that the dropping of atomic bombs by the US "could not be helped," Prime Minister Abe yesterday called him in to the Kantei and strongly reprimanded him. Abe apparently aimed at quickly quelling the uproar Kyuma's speech had created. However, the fallout from Kyuma's remark still continues.

Following Kyuma's statement, the arrangement has been made for Tomihisa Taue, mayor of Nagasaki City, and Takaichi Yoshihara, speaker of the Nagasaki City Assembly, to visit the Kantei to hold talks with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Matoba. They are expected to hand-deliver a letter from the Nagasaki City' Assembly lodging a protest, noting that Kyuma's remark, which has slighted the feelings of the victims of atomic bombings, is unacceptable. They will seek the withdrawal of the remark. They will also meet with Kyuma at the Defense Ministry.

An increasing number of members of the ruling parties are now concerned about a negative impact of the remark on the upcoming Upper House election compounded by the setback from the pension premium payment error issue. The LDP and the New Komeito will seek explanations from Kyuma tomorrow.

New Komeito Diet Policy Committee Chairman Yoshio Urushibara yesterday vented his anger against Kyuma: "We are doing our best to shore up the Abe administration. Making a statement that will work as a drag at such a time is impermissible. It is bound to affect the Upper House election negatively. We are furious. What is he up to?"

8) Opposition parties to demand Prime Minister Abe dismiss Kyuma from office over A-bomb remarks

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NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
July 3, 2007

All the opposition parties have decided to demand that the prime minister dismiss Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma due to his remarks describing the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the

United States as "something that couldn't be helped." The opposition camp intends to demand Kyuma's presence in Diet deliberations and call Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's responsibility into question ahead of the upcoming House of Councillors election. For the sake of the election, the government and the ruling parties want to quell the matter quickly.

Calling Kyuma to his office yesterday morning, Prime Minister Abe sternly warned him to watch his mouth so as not to cause any misunderstanding. Shortly after Kyuma's remarks, Abe defended him, saying: "I think that he simply introduced the United States' view." But growing criticism seems to have forced Abe to shift his stance.

Abe also stressed to reporters that he had no intention of dismissing Kyuma. Kyuma, meeting the press after his meeting with Abe, described the opposition parties' pressure to fire him, said: "There have been such demands before, as well."

The mood in the ruling camp is severe. New Komeito Diet affairs chief Yoshio Urushibara said to the press in a strong tone: "We have been working hard to buoy up the Abe administration. Any comment thwarting our efforts is intolerable. (Mr. Kyuma) offered an apology. He should not have made such remarks in the first place."

Former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori of the Liberal Democratic Party also took this view in Yokohama: "Some cabinet ministers are prone to make controversial remarks, and they have caused public distrust in the entire cabinet." Upper House lawmaker Sanzo Hosaka, who is going to run in the upcoming race, in a meeting in Tokyo called for the defense minister's resignation.

Kyuma has repeatedly made controversial comments. In January, he said that the Bush administration's decision to launch the Iraq war was a mistake, conflicting with the government's view. All those developments can explain why his latest remarks have drawn such a strong reaction from other ruling members.

But with the Upper House election drawing closer, some think fueling the matter is not wise. Earlier this year, Health, Labor and Welfare Minister Hakuo Yanagisawa came under heavy fire as he likened women to baby-making machines. But Abe continued to defend Yanagisawa. Abe's options this time are also limited.

9) Kyuma's remarks on atomic bombings hurts ruling parties; Calls for his dismissal growing

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)
July 3, 2007

In the wake of Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma's comment that the US atomic bombings could not be helped, many in the ruling parties are concerned that the controversial remarks will inevitably affect the outcome of the House of Councillors election. Lawmakers of the New Komeito, the coalition partner of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), are also calling for Kyuma's dismissal.

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Yoichi Masuzoe, chairman of the LDP Upper House Policy Research Council, stressed last night in Yokohama:

"I want the defense minister to take responsibility. I'm not saying he should quit his post. He should restudy history and apologize to the public. I hope the minister will kneel on the ground during his campaign across the nation."

Health, Labor and Welfare Minister Hakuo Yanagisawa also made controversial remarks by calling women "baby-making machines." In the Aichi gubernatorial election held in February soon after Yanagisawa's remarks, the candidate backed by the ruling coalition faced an uphill battle even though he had been expected to win an easy victory.

Therefore, many in the ruling coalition assume that they will face an uphill battle in the upcoming election, with a senior LDP member

saying: "Like the baby-making machine remark, Kyuma said something he should not have said. An attack by the opposition is unavoidable."

The ruling LDP is desperate to win a seat in the Nagasaki constituency, from which Kyuma was elected. A senior LDP member, however, took a severe view: "Since his comment rubbed Nagasaki people the wrong way, it will certainly affect the election."

10) Defense Minister Kyuma's controversial remarks about atomic bombing a serious blow to ruling camp

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)
July 3, 2007

The victims of atomic bombs are now venting their anger on controversial remarks made by Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma that the US atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki "could not have been helped." Abe cabinet ministers have continued making inappropriate remarks since the inauguration of the cabinet last September. Kyuma made his controversial remarks at the worst timing, just before the House of Councillors election this month. Although he retracted his comment and Abe reprimanded Kyuma over the remarks, his comment on atom bombs remains a big blow to the government and ruling parties.

Abe summoned Kyuma to his official residence early Monday and warned him to be more careful with his words that may be misunderstood. Kyuma then apologized and retracted his remarks.

Kyuma made the controversial comment on Saturday. Abe tried to calm down the negative reactions brought by Kyuma's comment out of concern that it would unavoidably have an adverse impact on the outcomes of the Upper House election if he did nothing.

Abe yesterday repeatedly stressed to reporters that he would not dismiss Kyuma, saying, "I want him to make efforts for nuclear disarmament."

A government official expressed his confidence that Kyuma's withdrawal of his remarks and Abe's reprimand have put an end to the Kyuma flap.

However Abe cabinet ministers have made inappropriate remarks almost every month since the cabinet was formed. Kyuma's controversial comment this time around has raised questions about Abe's

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leadership.

11) Anger swirling around Kyuma's controversial remarks

ASAHI (Page 1) (Full)
July 3, 2007

In reaction to Defense Minister Kyuma's controversial remarks calling the US atomic bombings "unavoidable," members of victims' groups and others held protests in Tokyo, Nagasaki, and other cities yesterday.

The Japan Confederation of A- and H-bomb Sufferers' Organizations and the Tokyo A-bomb Sufferers' Organization held an emergency gathering at the House of Representatives' Diet members' office building last evening. Mariko Iida, 75, chairman of the latter group who survived the bombing of Nagasaki, angrily said: "Although he must have heard of victims' hardships, he made a statement taking the side of the United States, which dropped the atomic bombs. It is impermissible." Japan confederation deputy chief Kanzo Iwasa, 78, who survived the bombing of Hiroshima, grumbled: "His words might be taken as 'unavoidable' even if nuclear weapons are used again." The participants adopted a resolution calling on Prime Minister Abe to withdraw his remarks defending Kyuma and instruct him to take responsibility for the remarks in question.

At Peace Park in Nagasaki, about 80 persons, including A-bomb victims from three organizations, also staged a sit-in yesterday,

carrying a banner saying, "Don't forgive Kyuma's comment."

12) Mori: "Prime Minister is not responsible" for Kyuma's remarks

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
July 3, 2007

Yu Takayama

In a speech yesterday at a gathering of candidates-to-be for the upcoming Upper House election, former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) mentioned Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma's recent controversial comments that America's dropping of atomic bombs on Japan "couldn't be helped" and stood by the prime minister by noting, "Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is not responsible for that." Mori continued, "Although the prime minister bears the responsibility as a person with appointive power, he (Mr. Kyuma) has not made remarks significantly deviating from what is socially acceptable in the past." Mori thus indicated that the prime minister's responsibility should not be questioned.

As for the dropping approval ratings for the Abe cabinet in the wake of such problems as missing pension records, Mori spoke for Abe: "Mr. Abe is solid and firm in his attitude, but lawmakers working in the Prime Minister's Official Residence were initially not familiar with that attitude (and confused). That caused the approval ratings to go down. Now, things are going smoothly."

13) Administrative Vice Defense Minister: "I'll refrain from making a comment" on Kyuma's controversial remarks

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
July 3, 2007

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At a press briefing yesterday afternoon, Administrative Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya was asked about Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma's comments that the dropping of atomic bombs by the United States "could not be helped" and said: "On the part of the Ministry of Defense, I'll refrain from making a comment."

When asked if it is not that the defense minister has often made slips of the tongue, Moriya noted: "When his remarks caused controversy, the defense minister has revealed his real intentions in the past."

14) Kyuma's remarks reflect Japan's posture toward nuclear arms

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Abridged slightly)
July 3, 2007

Japan's ambiguous attitude toward nuclear weapons lies behind Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma's controversial atomic bombing remarks.

Japan's series of nuclear disarmament proposals since 1994 has been adopted by the United Nations. At the Nagasaki A-bomb peace memorial ceremony on August 9, 2006, then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi announced the country's determination to uphold the three non-nuclear principles and continue to spearhead the international drive for nuclear disarmament and permanent peace.

At the same time, remaining in America's nuclear umbrella has been Japan's defense foundation. The 2006 Defense White Paper reads: "Japan believes it can build a watertight defense posture to ensure its security by using the deterrent power realized by the immense military power of the United States."

Japan has become more dependent on America's nuclear umbrella since North Korea conducted a nuclear test last October. In her talks with Foreign Minister Taro Aso in October in Japan, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice promised that the United States would follow US-Japan security guarantee agreements and would defend Japan. Around that time, Japan's nuclear option was debated.

Being the only country to have suffered atomic bombs, calling for nuclear disarmament in the international community has been regarded as Japan's responsibility. But the gap between such an ideal and reality is expanding. The country seems to be prioritizing the political use of nuclear weapons over its call for nuclear disarmament. Kyuma's remarks reflect such a trend.

Over the dropping of atomic bombs, the late Emperor Showa (Hirohito) indicated in a press conference in 1975: "It was unfortunate that (the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima), and I sympathize with the residents. But it was inevitable, for the country was in state of war." The late Emperor's view struck a chord with former Nagasaki Mayor Hitoshi Motoshima, who thinks Japan should mull what drove it to the war and call its responsibility into question rather than to underline its damage.

Should the prime minister's reprimand and Kyuma's apology for his gaffe be enough to put the case behind once and for all? The defense minister's remarks have created a stir in Japan's nuclear armament debate.

15) Postwar government has never protested atomic bombings

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YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
July 3, 2007

How has the Japanese government responded to the dropping of atomic bombs by the US in 1945?

The government lodged a strong protest with the US on Aug. 10, 1945, over the dropping of an atomic bomb in Nagasaki, through Switzerland, a neutral state, calling the use of atomic weapons a "new crime against humanity." However, according to a Foreign Ministry source, Japan has not lodged a formal protest with the US on the atomic bombings in the postwar era.

During that time, Japan has depended on US nuclear deterrence for its security. For this reason, the Japanese government has steered clear of indicating any clear stance on whether the use of nuclear arms itself is illegal under international law.

In the meantime, Japan has done its utmost to create momentum in the international community for abolishing nuclear arms. It has submitted UNGA resolutions seeking the abolition of nuclear arms every year since 1994 and has had all such resolutions adopted. Main features of Japan-sponsored resolutions are strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and seeking nuclear disarmament from nuclear powers. Japan has thus indicated its position as the only country on which nuclear weapons have been used to the international community.

16) Ruling party Diet Policy Committee chairs agree to carry over three labor-related bills to next Diet session

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
July 3, 2007

LDP Diet Policy Chairman Toshihiro Nikai and his New Komeito counterpart Yoshio Urushibara yesterday met in the Diet building. They agreed to carry over three labor-related bills, a set of bills on establishment of a Japanese national security council, a bill amending the Broadcasting Law, a bill unifying pension systems, and a bill amending the local government employee law to the next session of the Lower House to be enacted during an extraordinary session slated to be convened in the fall.

17) Administrative vice foreign minister: Early resumption of six-party talks "seems difficult"

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
July 3, 2007

At a press conference yesterday, Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi touched on a high-level US government official's outlook that six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear issue would be resumed around July 10 and noted: "From a common sense point of view, holding them around that time seems difficult." US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, America's chief negotiator in the six-party talks, has indicated at press conferences after his visit to North Korea on June 21 that the six-party talks may be resumed around July 10.

18) Okazaki: "I am engaged in modifying descriptions at Yushukan"

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ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
July 3, 2007

Former Ambassador to Thailand Hisahiko Okazaki, an advisor to Prime Minister Abe on diplomatic issues, yesterday indicated his involvement in the ongoing review of descriptions in exhibits at the war museum Yushukan of Yasukuni Shrine. Okazaki said in a speech at the Foreign Correspondents Club in Japan: "I am now engaged in modifying descriptions used in exhibits at Yasukuni Shrine's Yushukan." He added: "I rewrote the original descriptions related to how the Japan-US War and the Sino-Japanese War were started."

On the Japan-US War, Okazaki said: "It is true that President Roosevelt devised ways to prompt Japan to fire the first shot." Regarding the United States' motives, he remarked: "I deleted the part 'in order to emerge from the depression' and instead inserted these words: 'the 1937 isolation speech' (in which President Roosevelt criticized Japan, Germany and Italy after the start of the Sino-Japanese War)."

With respect to the Sino-Japanese War, Okazaki stated: "China opened the war if it is limited to the second one that started in 1937," but he also said: "I added as a long-term cause the Japanese Imperial Army's operations starting in 1935 to separate Beijing and other places in the northern part of China from the Chinese government under the Nationalist Party."

A spokesman for Yasukuni Shrine explained: "Upon listening to views from many experts, the shrine is reviewing descriptions on its own judgment."

19) Japan agrees with India to draw up energy-conservation action program

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
July 3, 2007

Yasuo Takeuchi, New Deli

The governments of Japan and India issued a joint statement on energy cooperation yesterday. In order to save energy in India, both sides agreed to work out goals and voluntary action programs for each type of business. Japan aims to bring India into a framework to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. The Japanese government also intends to call on the United States, China, and other major emitters of greenhouse gases to prepare similar goals and programs.

Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Toshiaki Amari, currently visiting India, and India's Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Ahluwalia signed the joint statement.

The joint statement specifies Japan's technical assistance to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in India. The two countries agreed to launch a project designed to dispatch experts to designated plants in steel, cement and other industries to check their efforts. Japan will accept 200 Indian trainees for energy conservation over the coming three years. Japan also plans to transfer technology to improve energy efficiency when coal is used for power generation after impurities are removed.

